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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

268th meeting

Tuesday, 28 March 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Rowe ..... (Sierra Leone)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 2006 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission.

As in past years, the Commission has been convened today for a brief session to deal with organizational matters, including the election of the Chairman and of other members of the Bureau for 2006 and the adoption of a draft provisional agenda for the next substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

With regard to the election of the chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I understand that intensive consultations are being conducted with the various regional groups. We hope that very soon we will be in a position to present candidates to the Commission for its approval. We note that those consultations are ongoing, but I would like to remind delegations that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998, the chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies are to be elected for the full three-year cycle of the Commission. That, in turn, underlines the responsibility involved in chairing the groups. It will require some degree of commitment on the part of the future chairpersons. We have succeeded in having an agenda. We should not miss this opportunity to get into substantive work. The only way in which we can demonstrate our determination to engage in substantive work is to have the two subsidiary bodies fully constituted and their chairpersons named, so that we can start working in earnest.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: I wish now to draw the Committee's attention to the agenda for this organizational session, which is published in today's *Journal*. Are there any comments? If I hear none, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

Election of the Chairman

The Chairman: In accordance with the established practice of rotation, it is the Group of Asian States that has the honour to nominate the candidate for the post of Chairman of the Commission for its 2006 substantive session. I have received a note from the Chairman of that Group informing me that the Group has endorsed a candidate.

It is my pleasure to give the floor to the representative of Kuwait to present to the Commission the candidate for the post of the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2006 session.

Mr. Al-Najem (Kuwait): Mr. Chairman, I have the honour to inform you that the Asian Group has endorsed Ambassador Oh Joon of the Republic of Korea for the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission.

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06-28689 (E)

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Kuwait for his statement and for the nomination of Ambassador Oh Joon, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, to the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Ambassador Oh Joon of the Republic of Korea to the chairmanship of the Commission for its 2006 substantive session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: On behalf of the Commission and on my own behalf, I congratulate Ambassador Oh Joon on his election to this very high office and to express the commonly shared view that we are looking forward to benefiting from his wide experience and diplomatic skills. We wish him success in discharging his newly assumed important duties. I think he faces an onerous task. However, in my view, he also has the capacity and the experience to ensure that we make good use of the Commission. He has the determination to underscore the efficacy of the Commission, which remains one of the most effective multilateral machineries for disarmament and non-proliferation.

I now invite Ambassador Oh Joon to assume the chairmanship.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea) took the Chair.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the members of the Commission for having elected me Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and for the important task entrusted to me in chairing this organizational session. I consider this an acknowledgement of my country's contribution to the important cause of international security and disarmament. I also want to thank the previous Chairman for the kind words and good wishes addressed to me. Although I am not sure if I have the capacity he mentioned, I am counting on the support and cooperation of all Member States in achieving the Commission's important goals.

Before turning to the next item on our agenda, allow me to pay a well-deserved tribute to my predecessor, Ambassador Sylvester Rowe, for the guidance and leadership he provided to the Commission. My gratitude also goes to other members of the Bureau for their valiant and tireless efforts during the previous session. Finally, let me thank delegations for their constructive spirit and cooperation during the Commission's deliberations last year, which resulted in agreement on three substantive items on the agenda.

Of course, it is a disappointment for all of us that it was not possible to hold substantive sessions of the Commission during the last two years. It is not an easy task to try to reach a perfect balance of interests on issues as important as disarmament and security and on ways and means to achieve them. While introducing the draft resolution in the First Committee, Ambassador Rowe, the Chairman of the Commission in 2005, spoke about this problem.

As we move on from the difficulties we have had in the past, today I invite the Commission to look at the future. Let me make a few general observations about the future as I see it. The 2006 international disarmament calendar is rich with events. The outside world — the community of nations — expects a lot from those events. These general expectations are rooted in a number of factors. Let me briefly draw the attention of the Commission to some of them.

First of all, despite the fact that the last two years have not been the easiest or most productive years for the international multilateral disarmament machinery, we still believe that the present international climate not only calls for urgent measures but also allows for a wide variety of undertakings in the field of disarmament. The international disarmament community has had its share of disappointments in recent years, but it also has had positive achievements of which to be rightfully proud. We all share a vision of a more secure and peaceful world, and we have the resolve to work towards its realization.

Secondly, the inability of the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission to achieve tangible results has contributed to a heightened sense of urgency on the part of the international community to reform and revitalize disarmament machinery in such a way that it can start adequately to react and respond to emerging threats to global peace and security. That new element adds to the already existing heavy responsibility which we bear collectively and individually. What happens within these walls is not an isolated event. It is an integral part

of global disarmament efforts at all levels, governmental or non-governmental.

Thirdly, the emergence of new kinds of threats and the fact that they have rapidly been thrust to the forefront of our security concerns, and the need to deal with them without further delay, have created a new atmosphere of greater expectations among politicians, disarmament professionals, non-governmental organizations, the academic community and civil society — in other words, among the general public at large.

We hope that this overall atmosphere of expectation will positively influence the work of the Disarmament Commission in 2006. Here I should like to refer to the broad-based support for the Disarmament Commission expressed during the session of the First Committee by practically all delegations. Even the criticism levelled at the Commission was of a constructive nature. Delegations pointed to shortcomings and spoke in a businesslike manner about ways and means to make the Commission's work more relevant and responsive to immediate security challenges. Our approach to the prospects of the Disarmament Commission in 2006 is based on that support and expressed good will.

Election of other officers

The Chairman: We shall now proceed to the election of other officers of the Disarmament Commission for 2006. In that connection, I now call on the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Galbavý (Slovakia): I have the honour to inform the Commission that the Group of Eastern European States has endorsed Mr. Jacek Januchowski of the Republic of Poland and Mr. Sergei Rachkov of the Republic of Belarus for the two posts of Vice-Chairperson of the Commission allocated to the Group.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Finland.

Mr. Taalas (Finland): I wish to confirm to the Commission that the Group of Western European and other States, at its meeting yesterday, endorsed the candidatures of Austria and Israel for the post of Vice-Chairperson of the Commission. We will be providing the names of the candidates in due course.

The Chairman: The following countries have thus far been nominated by their respective regional groups for posts of Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission: the Group of Eastern European States has endorsed the candidacies of Belarus and Poland, and the Group of Western European and other States has endorsed the candidacies of Austria and Israel.

If I hear no comment, I will take it that the Commission wishes to elect by acclamation the representatives of Austria, Belarus, Israel and Poland as Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission for the 2006 substantive session.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Allow me, on behalf of the Commission, to warmly congratulate the elected officers and to wish them success in discharging their duties. I look forward to working with them and count on their counsel.

As I understand, and as pointed out earlier by Ambassador Rowe, consultations are still being carried out within the regional groups on the remaining Vice-Chairperson positions and on the position of Rapporteur. Therefore, I would suggest that those elections be taken up at a later stage.

Review of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixtieth session relating to the Disarmament Commission

The Chairman: As members of the Commission are aware, the First Committee recommended for adoption by the General Assembly one draft resolution which had specific bearing on the work of the Commission. It was subsequently adopted by the Assembly as resolution 60/91. For the sake of clarity, and for the benefit of members of the Commission, I would like to refer to that resolution.

Resolution 60/91, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission", was adopted by the General Assembly on 8 December 2005 under agenda item 99 (d). The relevant paragraphs of the draft resolution, namely operative paragraphs 5 and 6, read as follows:

> "Welcomes the efforts made by the Disarmament Commission during its organizational meeting in July 2005 towards achieving its objectives, and recommends that the Commission intensify consultations on those efforts with a view to reaching definitive

agreements before the start of its substantive session in 2006;

"Requests the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding three weeks during 2006, from 10 to 28 April, and to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session".

I am happy to report that the recommendations contained in operative paragraph 5 were fully met and that, over the period of the next three years, the Commission will be taking up two very interesting and topical items: "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". As members are aware, the Commission also agreed, at its 267th meeting, on 12 December 2005, that the issue of measures for improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the Disarmament Commission would be considered in plenary meeting during the 2006 substantive session, with equitable time allocated to it.

Every three years, the Commission and its members are confronted with the problem of choosing substantive items for ensuing discussions. On previous occasions, the Commission has each time had to overcome seemingly intractable differences, but has eventually agreed on topics worthy of our focused attention. More often than not, compromise has come through a prolonged and painful negotiating process. I think the process of reaching agreement on the draft provisional agenda we have this year was particularly difficult. Once again, I want to thank Ambassador Rowe and delegations for their concentrated and courageous efforts in laying the groundwork for us.

Draft provisional agenda for the 2006 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission (A/CN.10/L.57)

The Chairman: As there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft provisional agenda for the 2006 substantive session as contained in document A/CN.10/L.57.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: The Commission is also invited to take note of the Commission's general programme of work (A/CN.10/2006/CRP.1), containing detailed information about the distribution of our future work.

Organizational matters

The Chairman: While we are considering the provisional agenda for the 2006 substantive session, let us also address the establishment of the working groups to deal with the two substantive agenda items, with the third item being addressed within plenary meetings, as agreed.

I suggest that we re-establish Working Groups I and II to deal with the two substantive items, on nuclear and conventional issues, respectively. Moreover, as in previous years, we have to establish the Committee of the Whole to deal with other substantive and organizational matters.

If there are no comments, I will take it that the Commission wishes to establish those three bodies.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should like to note that, according to established practice, all organizational matters should be concluded at the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission. Unfortunately, as I have already informed the Commission, we are not in a position today to deal with the appointment of chairpersons for the two subsidiary bodies, since the regional groups still have to agree on and present their candidates for those important posts.

Moreover, there are several other issues which we have left pending at this stage, namely, the nomination of candidates for the remaining posts of Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur. As I have said, this process will require more time to be finalized. Accordingly, it may be advisable for the Commission to suspend consideration of these matters for now so that the delegations can carry out further consultations.

I call on the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Sérgio de Queiroz Duarte (Brazil): Mr. Chairman, let me, on behalf of the Brazilian delegation, congratulate you on your election and pledge our full support to you, and to the other officers who have been elected, in your endeavours.

With regard to the appointment of coordinators for the Commission's two working groups, I am pleased to announce that the Brazilian delegation is in

a position to offer to continue to coordinate the work of Working Group II, on the item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons".

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Brazil for his delegation's willingness to take up the position of Chairman of Working Group II. If I hear no other comment, may I take it that the Commission decides to elect the representative of Brazil as Chairman of Working Group II?

It was so decided.

The Chairman: If there are no other comments on this organizational issue, I will take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to suspend the consideration of unresolved issues at this organizational session and to return to them at the beginning of the substantive session.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I encourage regional groups to proceed with their consultations on an urgent basis and to submit their remaining nominations as quickly as possible.

I would also like to inform members that I intend to hold informal consultations of the whole to discuss the work of the Commission for the substantive session before the beginning of the session on the afternoon of Monday, 3 April, at 3 p.m. in Conference Room 4. The purpose of the informal consultations will be to share our views on what we can expect to achieve at the upcoming session and on how we should proceed in dealing with the three substantive items on the agenda. As we all know, the Commission has not been able to have a substantive meeting for the last two years. Having been elected Chairman only this morning, I do not have enough time to consult member States in the runup to the beginning of the session the week after next.

Under the circumstances, we would be naïve if we set an overly ambitious goal for this session. But, at the same time, the fact that we have agreed on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission after two years' deadlock, might indicate willingness and readiness on the part of all Member States to at least come back to the table to grapple with the substantive issues and make efforts to narrow the gap in our views on them. Therefore, I sincerely believe that we should not miss this opportunity to pool our wisdom in order to move our talks forward in a constructive and practical manner.

In order to provide a basis for the informal consultations next week, I will circulate a short non-paper of the Chair later this week on conducting the business of the substantive session. In this regard, I would of course appreciate input or feedback from any member at any time in the process.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

United Nations A/CN.10/PV.269

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission
269th meeting
Monday, 10 April 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Oh Joon ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chairman: I declare open the 2006 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Before we turn to other items on our agenda, allow me, on behalf of all members of the Commission, to extend my sincere gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Chen Jian and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, which is responsible for servicing the meetings of this Commission, and to Under-Secretary-General Nobuaki Tanaka and the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which provides substantive support to the Commission. In particular, I would like to congratulate Mr. Tanaka, a widely respected diplomat, on his assumption of the position of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs; we appreciate his presence with us today.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chairman: Members of the Commission may recall that at our organizational session, on 28 March 2006, the Commission formally adopted the provisional agenda (A/CN.10/L.57). Therefore, at today's meeting, the Commission need not take any further action, but will simply take note of that document. May I take it that the Commission takes note of document A/CN.10/L.57?

It was so decided.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: As we begin this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, I would like to remind members that our discussions here are particularly important because they follow a series of setbacks in multilateral disarmament negotiations in recent years. The Conference on Disarmament has long been stalled; last year, the world summit in September was unable to address disarmament in its outcome document; and the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) failed to produce a final document. Moreover, the Disarmament Commission itself has not met for substantive work since 2003. Under these circumstances, it is clear that the agreement we reached last December on the agenda of this substantive session was a small but valuable step forward.

It is our responsibility to ensure that the window of opportunity is not neglected and that we build on the momentum to resume our work in earnest on these issues of importance for the future of the international community. We all know that it will not be easy to balance our interests and to achieve results that satisfy all of us. But we should not be daunted by the difficulties ahead. Nor can we afford to sit idle and wait for someone else to solve our problems. It is we who must find the way forward.

As I said when I was elected as Chairman of the Commission, we should not be overly ambitious in setting our goals for this session. We should be

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sensible and realistic. As we commence deliberations, I once again urge all members to approach our discussions with a sense of responsibility, urgency, seriousness, open-mindedness and flexibility. I am counting on us all to do our part in this collective endeavour.

Election of officers

The Chairman: I should now like to proceed to the election of the remaining members of the Bureau. As representatives will remember, the Commission still has to elect the Rapporteur and one Vice-Chairperson from the Group of African States, two Vice-Chairpersons from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and one Vice-Chairperson from the Group of Asian States.

I would like to inform the Commission that the Group of African States has successfully concluded its nomination process for the post of Rapporteur. The Group has nominated Mr. Coly Seck of Senegal to serve as Rapporteur of the Commission. The Group still has to nominate a candidate for one vice-chairmanship, and I urge it do so as soon as possible.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Coly Seck as Rapporteur.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I have also been informed that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated Chile and Uruguay for vice-chairmanships of the Commission. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Chile and Uruguay to vice-chairmanships.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I have further been informed that the Group of Asian States has nominated the Islamic Republic of Iran for a vice-chairmanship of the Commission. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect the Islamic Republic of Iran to a vice-chairmanship.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should like, on behalf of the Commission and the members of the Bureau, to warmly congratulate the newly elected members of the Bureau and to wish them success in the discharge of their duties. I am sure that they will make an important contribution to the smooth work of the Commission this year. On a more personal note, I should like to say that I shall count on their support and counsel.

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

The Chairman: I give the floor to Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. Tanaka (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): I am extremely gratified to have this first opportunity, in my new capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, to address the members of the Commission as it begins its work on the important agenda before it. I should like first to extend my personal congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to guide the work of the Commission. I would also like to assure all members of the fullest cooperation and support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs. I and my colleagues look forward to providing whatever assistance may be required to ensure that this will be a productive session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2005 session, Ambassador Sylvester Rowe of Sierra Leone, for his strenuous and ultimately successful efforts to reach agreement on a substantive agenda for the 2006 session.

We are meeting at a particularly difficult and challenging moment for disarmament and non-proliferation and at a time of heightened international concern about weapons of mass destruction (WMD), particularly nuclear weapons. In addition, there is the possibility of the acquisition by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the all-too-numerous, everyday tragedies of deaths caused by small arms.

Indeed, the scale of the difficulties that we are facing at the present time should not be underestimated. Last year's world summit demonstrated all too eloquently that States could not agree on the way forward on disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

I believe that the words of the Secretary-General perfectly encapsulate the nature of our present difficulties and set them in their wider context. In his

address to the world summit in September 2005, he said:

> "Twice this year — at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and now at this summit — we have allowed posturing to get in the way of results. That is inexcusable. Weapons of mass destruction pose a grave danger to us all, particularly in a world threatened by terrorists with global ambitions and no inhibitions. We must pick up the pieces in order to renew negotiations on that vital issue". (*A/60/PV.2, p. 5*)

Recent developments have further tested the effectiveness of the multilateral disarmament machinery. The Disarmament Commission plays a unique role. However, the Commission's recent record has itself been far from satisfactory. In 2003, the session concluded without reaching consensus on concrete proposals to advance nuclear disarmament or confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. No consensus was achieved on the agenda items for its 2004 and 2005 sessions, and no substantive meetings were held in 2005.

I believe that this year we must do better. It falls in large measure to the Disarmament Commission at this session to provide fresh momentum. We should not lose such an opportunity.

It is imperative that we draw lessons from the setbacks that we witnessed last year. The lack of consensus on any text on disarmament and non-proliferation in the 2005 summit outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) simply shows how much work remains to be done in this area. We should move forward from lamenting the lack of consensus documents and, as the President of the General Assembly, Jan Eliasson, urged, come up with new and creative thinking in all appropriate forums.

By agreeing in December 2005 on the agenda item on recommendations for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, in particular for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament, in addition to the item on conventional disarmament, the Disarmament Commission now has a substantive agenda for its new three-year cycle of consideration.

It is our responsibility, more than ever before, to use this opportunity to strengthen the disarmament machinery to deal effectively with new emerging threats and challenges. It is hoped, therefore, that over the next three weeks members will be able to provide guidance on the fundamental question of complete nuclear disarmament.

States need to build a common and shared understanding of the most immediate nuclear threats and, along with that, a systematic analysis of how changing threat perceptions influence the way we address the challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation.

As the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a landmark international treaty, the objective of which is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goals of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, the Commission may wish, for example, to consider that practical steps might be taken to ensure the continuing relevance and strength of the Treaty. The urgency of international concern about the imminent risk of proliferation is very evident, but at the same time it should not be forgotten that, globally, nuclear weapons continue to number in the thousands.

Ultimately, the outcome will depend on close cooperation between countries from every region of the world, as well as with international organizations, research institutions and think tanks. While the NPT review process is certainly an important arena for assessing progress in implementing the norm of global nuclear non-proliferation, the Disarmament Commission has the advantage of being a fully universal deliberative body, which enables it to complement the goals of the NPT review process. Working in tandem, these two arenas offer great potential to move the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda forward. I, therefore, call on all States to reflect on and implement concerted actions based on pragmatism and realism.

The preponderant focus on the WMD threat should not diminish our attention to matters relating to the regulation and reduction of conventional arms and armed forces. Despite the fact that much progress has been made by the international community in certain areas — such as, for instance, in addressing the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons — proliferation continues to pose a serious threat to peace

and security in too many regions of the world. Symptomatic treatment and ad hoc solutions cannot yield durable results. There is a need for increased openness and transparency with regard to legitimate arms transfers for defensive purposes. Such openness will promote confidence. The challenge before the Commission is to consider and adopt measures that will contribute to reducing the threat to international peace and security posed by conventional weapons while at the same time protecting the inherent right of all Member States to the means of self-defence. I believe that agreement among States on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons may alleviate pressure to acquire such weaponry and encourage responsible conduct in the transfer of major conventional weapon systems, while reducing the risk of armed conflict.

I hope that in the Commission's consideration of the issue it will build on the achievements of the 2003 session, taking into due consideration the developments since then.

In conclusion, I should like to draw attention to one part of the world summit outcome document on strengthening the United Nations:

> "We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the United Nations with a view to enhancing its authority and efficiency, as well as its capacity to address effectively, and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, the full range of challenges of our time. We are determined to reinvigorate the intergovernmental organs of the United Nations and to adapt them to the needs of the twenty-first century" (*General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 146*)

The summit gave renewed emphasis to such efforts, and I see this session of the Disarmament Commission as being an integral part of those efforts. It is for this reason that I look forward to the contribution that can be made by Member States to achieving this wider objective during the coming session. I am confident that members will find ways of making the Commission more effective as part of the overall efforts to reform the United Nations.

We meet at a time of a continuing, and deeply depressing, stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, due to the inability to reach agreement on a substantive programme of work. It is now, therefore, all the more important to revitalize and reaffirm the deliberative function of the Disarmament Commission. As part of the multilateral disarmament machinery, the Disarmament Commission should continue to play its own unique role.

For those reasons, I strongly hope that the Commission will be able to commence meaningful deliberations on the substantive issues this year, so as to demonstrate its continuing potential as an important, indeed vital, forum for the discussion of disarmament issues. I therefore call on delegations not to add organizational obstacles to the complexity of the issues before the Commission. I strongly encourage all delegations concerned to intensify their consultations on the nomination for the chairmanship of Working Group I as soon as possible so that the Commission can begin work on all its substantive agenda items.

I hope that members will accept my very best wishes for an effective, successful and productive session.

Organization of work

The Chairman: On behalf of the Bureau, allow me to make some general observations and to say a few words about our future work. As members remember, some issues concerning the work within the working groups were already discussed and settled at our last organizational session. However, one important question remains — namely, the vacant post of the Chairman of Working Group I. I can inform the Commission that intensive consultations are going on between members of the Bureau and all regional groups, with a view to finding a candidate for the chairmanship of Working Group I as early as possible.

For the next three weeks, we already have an excellent programme of work, which has been prepared by the Secretariat. However, if it is not possible to achieve an early election to the Working Group I chairmanship, then we might need to make changes to our programme of work in order to deal first with other issues until we are able to start the work of Working Group I.

General exchange of views

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): Speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), I wish first of all to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your unanimous

ection to preside over this year's session of the isarmament Commission. We are confident that, nder your able guidance and leadership, the 2006 ssion of the Disarmament Commission will succeed fulfilling the mandate entrusted to it by the General ssembly. The Non-Aligned Movement would also e to extend its felicitations to the other members of e Bureau on their election, as well as to the airperson of Working Group II.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to elcome Ambassador Nobuaki Tanaka, the new Under-cretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and to press our gratitude for his statement on various sarmament and international security issues.

The NAM underlines the importance of all mber States reaffirming their full commitment to purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and ir obligation to strictly observe its principles and er relevant and generally accepted principles of ernational law. It is undeniable that the Commission s faced difficult times in the past few years. Its bility to reach consensus in the previous cycle was rettable. Today we are meeting against the backdrop setbacks in the area of disarmament and non-liferation, as shown, inter alia, by the failure of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to agree on stantive recommendations and the inability of the 05 world summit to make any reference to armament and non-proliferation in its outcome ument.

Yet, the deliberative function of the Disarmament mmission becomes all the more important when es and situations are complex. In that regard, the M reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament mmission as the specialized deliberative body hin the United Nations multilateral disarmament chinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on cific disarmament issues leading to the submission oncrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

The NAM remains committed to the mmission's basic purposes and principles. But since 2003 substantive session of the Disarmament mmission, we have been really concerned that the mmission has been unable to play its role in meeting llenges of the current global environment. However, recognize that the Commission has had very uctive sessions, particularly in 1999, when it was able to reach consensus on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for conventional arms control.

The work of the Disarmament Commission has greatly contributed to the emergence of global disarmament norms. Being a strictly deliberative forum, the Commission often encounters disagreements among its members over policies and priorities. That was reflected in the fact that it took almost three years for the Commission to agree on the two substantive agenda items for its session this year.

The NAM emphasizes that progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects is essential to strengthening international peace and security. We appeal to all States to pursue and intensify multilateral negotiations, as agreed by consensus in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I), with a view to achieving nuclear disarmament under effective international control and strengthening the international disarmament arms control and non-proliferation regimes.

With regard to the first substantive agenda item, entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", the NAM reiterates its principled positions on nuclear disarmament and the related issue of nuclear non-proliferation that have been fully reflected in the relevant documents adopted by the summits and ministerial meetings of the NAM. We also believe that the vision and principles contained in the Final Document of SSOD I remain relevant. We further maintain the need for all members of the Commission to fulfil their obligations in relation to arms control and disarmament and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects.

The NAM reaffirms that, in efforts towards the objective of nuclear disarmament, global and regional approaches and confidence-building measures complement each other and should, wherever possible, be pursued simultaneously, in order to promote regional and international peace and security.

The NAM expresses its concern at the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament, which constitutes its primary disarmament objective and remains its highest priority. In that context, we underscore the need for nuclear-weapon States to implement their unequivocal undertaking to achieve

the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and emphasize in that regard the urgent need to commence negotiations without delay.

The NAM believes that the efforts of the international community aimed at non-proliferation should be parallel to simultaneous efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament. We further believe that the most effective way to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is through the total elimination of such weapons. In that context, we underline the need for the threat posed by terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction to be addressed within the framework of the United Nations and through international cooperation consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The NAM also reiterates its long-standing principled position in favour of the total elimination of all nuclear testing and expresses concern over the lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, and the negative developments with regard to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The NAM reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We reiterate our conviction that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts to conclude the universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority.

The NAM again calls for an international conference, to be held at the earliest possible date, with the objective of arriving at an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified time frame to eliminate all nuclear weapons and to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, as well as to provide for their destruction. In that context, we reiterate the resolve demonstrated by heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit, as contained in the Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), to strive towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open to achieve that aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways and means to eliminate nuclear dangers.

The NAM continues to consider the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba as a positive step towards attaining the objective of nuclear disarmament. The NAM welcomes the efforts aimed at establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned and calls for cooperation and broad consultation in order to achieve that goal.

The NAM reiterates its support for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. To that end, it reaffirms the need for the speedy establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus.

The States members of the Non-Aligned Movement recall that the 2000 NPT Review Conference reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, so as to realize the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East.

The States members of the Movement that are parties to the NPT remain fully convinced that the NPT is a key instrument in efforts to halt the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and an essential foundation for nuclear disarmament. The States parties to the NPT should work towards a fair balance between mutual obligations and responsibilities under the Treaty, with a view to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The States members of the Movement that are parties to the NPT call for the full implementation of, and a firm commitment by all States parties to, the package agreed to at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which comprises the decision on "Strengthening the Review Process of the Treaty", the decision on "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament", the decision on "Extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", and the "Resolution on the Middle East", as well as the Final Document of the 2000 NPT

Review Conference, in particular the 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty.

With respect to the agenda item on confidence-building measures, the Movement supports such measures in the field of conventional arms as a way to strengthen international peace and security. We recognize that since the Second World War millions of people have lost their lives in numerous conflicts fought with conventional weapons, and current trends do not give any reason to believe that there will be any decrease in the incidence and severity of such conflicts. Hence the situation with regard to conventional arms is a source of increasing concern.

The Movement believes that confidence-building is neither a substitute nor a precondition for disarmament measures, yet its potential for creating an atmosphere conducive to arms control and disarmament has been demonstrated in various parts of the world. We believe also that an unbalanced and incomplete approach, especially in some regions of the world, will not allow the desired result — building confidence — to be achieved.

The Movement also believes that confidence-building measures, especially when applied in a comprehensive manner, can be conducive to achieving security structures based on cooperation and openness and thus contribute to the wider objective of the renunciation of the threat or use of force. The implementation of guidelines for types of confidence-building measures that are appropriate to all States is of significance, as the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in a region must be taken fully into account.

The Movement expresses its firm support for the unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures adopted by some Governments aimed at reducing military expenditures, which contribute to strengthening regional and international peace and security. We recognize that confidence-building measures assist in that regard.

With regard to the second substantive agenda item, the Movement supports the proposal made by the Chairman that the Commission continue its deliberations on the Chairman's consolidated working paper, as contained in the report of the Disarmament Commission for 2003 (A/58/42).

Concerning other issues under consideration by the Commission, the Movement, while reaffirming General Assembly decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998, believes that efforts to improve the methods of work of the Disarmament Commission should be seen as an integral part of a balanced and comprehensive revitalization of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, the Movement wishes to reiterate its readiness to cooperate with you, the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Group to ensure the success of the 2006 session of the Disarmament Commission. We also look forward to working actively and constructively with all members of the Commission with a view to reaching consensus on substantive recommendations on the two agenda items under consideration.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and the countries aligning themselves with this statement.

Let me start by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman and by thanking the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament for his statement. We look forward to working closely with you.

The EU welcomes the fact that, after several years of inactivity, agreement was reached on the agenda for this year's session. At the 2003 session of the Commission, it was recognized that disarmament and non-proliferation are very critical issues that are essential to peace, security and prosperity, but a divergence of views impeded the achievement of the desirable goal of seeing the Disarmament Commission at work once again. Our objective is to agree on recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. We should also use this opportunity to discuss measures to improve our Commission's effectiveness. The EU looks forward to constructive discussions and will do its utmost to achieve consensus on concrete recommendations.

It is timely for the Commission to explore possible recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Last year we saw the NPT Review Conference end without agreement on any of the substantive issues. The United Nations summit in

September adopted a final document but failed to agree on language in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. While diplomatic efforts failed to achieve consensus, there is broad agreement that the security of the international community is being challenged, both globally and regionally, by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and the risk of non-State actors' gaining access to such weapons. New threats have emerged, the tragic consequences of international terrorism have become clear, and clandestine nuclear activities have surfaced. The European Union recognizes the importance, from the point of view of nuclear disarmament, of programmes for the destruction and elimination of nuclear weapons and of fissile material as defined under the Group of Eight Global Partnership.

It is thus of the utmost importance that all existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements be effectively implemented and fully complied with. The EU believes that the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT are essential for global peace and security. The NPT is the cornerstone of that regime, based on three mutually reinforcing pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We believe that the NPT is as important today as it was when it was first agreed upon more than 35 years ago. In order to help preserve the integrity of the NPT, the European Union will continue to promote, in a structured and balanced manner, all the objectives laid down in the Treaty as identified in the EU Common Position adopted prior to the 2005 Review Conference.

We regret that last year's NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a substantive final document to address the most pressing challenges to the Treaty. We see that as a missed opportunity. But the Conference provided an opportunity to discuss practical ways to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to promote the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and to further develop nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. Other issues were raised, including the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, Iran, negative security assurances, North Korea and the question of withdrawal from the Treaty.

Our conviction, as expressed in the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, is that a multilateral approach to non-proliferation provides the best means of countering this threat to international security. The NPT must not be undermined by States parties seeking to acquire or contribute directly or indirectly to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The EU will continue to work towards universal accession to the NPT, calling on all States not parties to the Treaty to undertake commitments to non-proliferation and disarmament and calling on those States to become States parties to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

The EU continues to support the decisions and resolutions adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and will bear in mind the current situation. We also note that the final report, which includes the programme of work adopted by consensus at the 2005 NPT Review Conference, constitutes a reference for the future review process, in which the EU will engage on the basis of its Common Position. Let me also recall the proposal that, in order to help improve the operation of the NPT, we should consider holding the first Preparatory Committee meeting for the next Review Conference in 2007 in Vienna. The second meeting could be held in Geneva and the third in New York.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) forms an essential part of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. With a view to the Treaty's entry into force as soon as possible, the EU reiterates its call on States — particularly those listed in Annex II — to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay and without conditions and, pending its entry into force, to abide by a moratorium on nuclear testing and to refrain from any action contrary to the obligations and provisions of the CTBT. In that context, the European Union welcomes the Final Declaration of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, which took place in September 2005. The EU highlights the importance of the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, and we actively support the Special Representative of the States that have ratified the Treaty in his work promoting universal accession.

The ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament is a matter of concern. We are convinced that current threats to peace and security require that that standstill be overcome. The EU is strongly

committed to reaching a consensus on a programme of work in the Conference and welcomes the fact that new ideas and new proposals have been put forward over the past few years. We appreciate those efforts aimed at promoting consensus on a programme of work and support the efforts of the six presidencies of the Conference this year to that end.

The EU appeals again to the Conference on Disarmament for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of a non-discriminatory, universally applicable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, without preconditions and bearing in mind the Special Coordinator's report and the mandate included therein. Pending entry into force of such a treaty, we call on all States to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the action of those of the five nuclear-weapon States that have declared such a moratorium. The negotiation at the Conference of such a fissile material cut-off treaty constitutes a priority for the European Union.

The European Union supports the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and welcomes the reduction in the number of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons and their delivery systems since the end of the cold war. We stress the need for an overall reduction of the global stockpile of nuclear weapons, in particular by those with the largest arsenals, in accordance with article VI of the NPT. In that context, we recognize the applicability of the principle of irreversibility to guide all measures in the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control as a contribution to the maintenance and enforcement of international peace, security and stability, taking those conditions into account. We are pursuing efforts to secure transparency as a voluntary confidence-building measure.

The European Union also highlights the importance of implementing of the declarations made by the Presidents of Russia and the United States in 1991 and 1992 on unilateral reductions in their stocks of non-strategic nuclear weapons. We call on all States with non-strategic nuclear weapons to include them in their general arms control and disarmament processes with a view to their reduction and elimination. We recognize the importance, from the point of view of nuclear disarmament, of programmes for the destruction and elimination of nuclear weapons and the elimination of fissile material as defined under the Group of Eight (G-8) Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

Since security in Europe is linked closely to security in the Mediterranean, we attach particular importance to non-proliferation and disarmament in that region and give top priority to the universalization and ratification of the NPT and the CTBT. The European Union calls on all States in that region to make the Middle East an effectively verifiable zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, in keeping with the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

The EU acknowledges the importance of the nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the regions concerned. Such zones enhance global and regional peace and security. We welcome and support the signature and ratification by the nuclear-weapon States of relevant protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zones following completion of the necessary consultations.

The European Union pays particular attention to the need to reinforce compliance with the multilateral treaty regime by enhancing the detectability of the violations and strengthening the enforcement of obligations established by this treaty regime.

To this end, particular emphasis is placed on making best use of existing verification mechanisms and, where necessary, establishing additional verification instruments as well as on strengthening the role of the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The European Union would like to highlight the unique role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in verifying States' compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation commitments and helping them, on request, to tighten up the security of nuclear materials and installations. The EU believes the IAEA international safeguards system is essential to the verification of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the success of this multilateral system.

The European Union considers that the comprehensive safeguards agreements together with additional protocols have a deterrent effect on nuclear proliferation and constitute the current IAEA

verification standard. We are also of the opinion that these are the essential means for States parties to demonstrate that they are fulfilling their obligations under Article III of the NPT. The EU would therefore like to reiterate its call for universal accession to the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols. EU member States are also working towards making the Additional Protocol a condition of supply for nuclear exports.

The European Union is committed to strong national, and internationally coordinated, export controls to complement our obligations under the NPT, supports the strengthening of the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) guidelines and urges the NSG and the Zangger Committee to share their experience on export controls to meet new non-proliferation challenges.

Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) plays a crucial role in developing an effective mechanism of prevention and counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of production and delivery to or export from States and non-State actors worldwide. The resolution, inter alia, calls upon all States, in accordance with their national legal authorities and legislation, and consistent with international law, to take cooperative action to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, their means of delivery and related materials. We urge States to continue this vital work.

The EU is willing to offer its assistance in implementing the provisions of the resolution. We are ready to provide assistance in building legal and administrative infrastructure, sharing our implementation experience and training respective national authorities.

The EU supports the Proliferation Security Initiative as well as the Global Threat Reduction Initiative and encourages States to participate in them. We emphasize the importance of the security of nuclear materials and installations and call on all States to ensure that effective arrangements for protection are in place. We therefore warmly welcome the successful outcome of the July 2005 conference amending the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and urge all parties to ensure that the Amendment to the Convention enters into force as soon as possible. In addition, we call upon all States that have not yet done so to adhere to the CPPNM and its Amendment and, until such time as the Amendment has entered into force, and urge all States to act in accordance with the object and purpose of the Amendment.

More broadly, the European Union stresses the need for general disarmament. This year, the Disarmament Commission will also continue to work on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. We believe that the Chairman's perception paper of the 2003 session constitutes a good basis to build upon and to learn from previous problems. The goal of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms is to strengthen international peace and security, improve relations among States and contribute to the prevention of war. The EU hopes that this session will bring about fruitful discussions leading to concrete and comprehensive recommendations designed to make progress in strengthening confidence and security and in achieving disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission can usefully contribute by preparing a list of confidence-building measures. In this context, the EU welcomes the paper put forward by the Chairman of Working Group II in 2003, which includes principles as well as practical measures. Confidence-building measures are valuable tools in conflict prevention as well as in post-conflict stabilization and rehabilitation, but they should not be regarded as a substitute or a precondition for disarmament measures nor divert attention from them. In both situations, the essential task of arms control is to create a positive process where measures implemented can create confidence and security through transparency and predictability. The confidence-building process would be facilitated by good governance and the rule of law, particularly by arms transparency, openness and cooperation in military matters. Confidence-building measures should also fully respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The EU supports and actively promotes the adoption of confidence-building measures when there is a need for a step-by-step building of trust and establishment of new patterns of interaction. In times of increased tension, openness and predictability are more important than ever. This implies, inter alia, verification regimes that ensure the reliability of the information provided.

Consideration could also be given to the establishment, on a voluntary basis, of regional, subregional or bilateral confidence-building measures to meet specific needs. They could complement existing confidence-building measures or arms control agreements, and they should contribute to strengthening overall security and stability. At the global level, States should actively improve the effectiveness of the Register of Conventional Arms, as well as the system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures.

The area of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is a prime example of where confidence-building measures have contributed to a new pattern of interaction. The discussions in 2003 showed no controversy. The role of the OSCE was recognized as an example of a contribution to the building of security and stability in a number of geographical areas. Since the first confidence-building measures were agreed upon at the Stockholm Conference in the mid-1980s, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the successive Vienna Documents have been instrumental in the creation of a new military culture of openness and transparency. These Documents, along with the Open Skies Treaty, which entered into force in January 2002, constitute the cornerstones of confidence-building measures on conventional arms in Europe and are fully supported by the European Union.

Confidence-building measures should cover not only measures, but also principles. The OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security contains norms that are fundamental to the EU member States and other OSCE participating States. The Code stipulates, inter alia, that all armed forces must be under effective democratic and constitutional control and have clearly defined tasks. Furthermore, all participating States are committed to educating their military personnel in international humanitarian law and rules governing armed conflict, and to ensuring transparency and public access to information related to the armed forces. The EU expresses the hope that the Disarmament Commission will endorse these principles in its recommendations.

Negotiations within the United Nations framework leading to the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms served as an inspiration for the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The European Union considers the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons to constitute the regional implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and hopes to build upon its existing confidence-building measures based on the outcome of the 2006 Review Conference.

The new European strategy on small arms and their ammunition of December 2005 formalizes the Union's existing small arms policies. It is a strategy with global geographic scope, which makes several proposals for progress at the 2006 Review Conference and encompasses confidence-building measures, and in that spirit we provide technical and financial assistance for many programmes and projects related to small arms. The strategy identifies Africa as the continent most affected by the impact of internal and cross-border conflicts aggravated by the destabilizing influx of small arms and light weapons, but the strategy also covers Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America.

The European Union's Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, adopted in 1998, has ushered in a new degree of transparency between Governments in arms transactions, not only by building upon common criteria for arms exports but also through the establishment of an information exchange and consultation mechanism. An internal review of the Code of Conduct is nearing completion.

The European Union considers transparency in armaments as fundamental in building confidence and security. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which is now in its thirteenth year of operation, is a key instrument. The European Union is committed to securing the widest possible participation in the Register and to improving its relevance and effectiveness in a way that continues to contribute to regional and subregional confidence-building efforts.

In the longer term, the EU believes that a positive contribution will be made to transparency and to confidence in the arms trade by the elaboration of an international treaty to establish common standards for the global trade in conventional arms. The EU is committed to moving that initiative forward.

We also attach great importance to the efforts of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. Those efforts include promoting responsible export policies towards, and effective export controls over, small arms and light weapons in order to prevent their uncontrolled proliferation,

destabilizing accumulation and diversion. In 2003, the States participating in the Wassenaar Arrangement also approved a number of additional important initiatives. They included tightening controls over man-portable air defence systems, agreeing to enhance transparency in small weapons transfers and establishing elements for national legislation on arms brokering.

We reiterate our endorsement of resolution 58/55, adopted at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, entitled "Promotion at a regional level in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe of the United Nations programme of action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects"; resolution 59/82, adopted at the fifty-ninth session, entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures"; and resolutions 60/74 and 60/44, adopted at the sixtieth session, entitled, respectively, "Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus" and "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures".

We also recall our support for the May 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines for arms transfers, as well as the April 1999 Disarmament Commission guidelines on conventional arms control and limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace.

Let me conclude my long — perhaps over-long — statement by stressing that the European Union is committed to continuing to actively participate in all appropriate forums to discuss and elaborate concrete confidence-building measures which contribute to security and cooperation between all States Members of the United Nations. Under your able guidance, Mr. Chairman, and with the work already done in 2003, I am confident that we will have fruitful deliberations and a productive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. I should also like to warmly welcome Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, who was recently appointed Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. We wish him every success in his new responsibilities.

Cuba endorses the statement of the representative of Indonesia, who spoke on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. I would like, however, to make some additional comments.

After two years during which the Commission was unable to play its important role, we greatly welcome the fact that this body has been able today to begin its regular work, with two very relevant issues on its agenda. It is now our responsibility to produce concrete results.

While we are making speeches in this room, out in the real world the majority of the people of the Earth are suffering as a result of the astronomical increase in military expenditure. Global military expenditure already exceeds $1 trillion and is continuing to climb. One country alone — the United States — spends as much on arms as the rest of the world combined, and United States corporations produce 60 per cent of all arms sold worldwide.

How much could be done if just a small fraction of current military expenditure was devoted to solving problems associated with underdevelopment and to narrowing the now growing gap between the richest and the poorest countries?

The resources currently being spent on arms could feed for one year the 852 million people of the world who are suffering from hunger, or supply, for 40 years, antiretroviral drugs to the 38 million people living with HIV/AIDS. With just 10 per cent of the money that is now being spent on weapons, the Millennium Development Goals could be reached.

That is the reality that we must tackle with concrete actions. We cannot sit idly by while many more resources continue to be spent on killing rather than on saving lives.

Cuba reiterates its proposal that at least half of current military expenditure be devoted to meeting the needs of economic and social development through a United Nations-managed fund.

In spite of the oft-proclaimed end of the cold war, there are, according to the most reliable estimates, almost 33,000 nuclear weapons in the world, more than 13,000 of them ready to be deployed immediately. Nuclear-weapon modernization programmes have not been halted.

The mere existence of nuclear weapons and of doctrines prescribing their possession and use represent a threat to international peace and security. That is why Cuba reaffirms the historic position of the Non-Aligned Movement that nuclear disarmament is, and must continue to be, the highest disarmament priority.

Cuba opposes those who seek to ignore or minimize the relevance of nuclear disarmament while imposing a selective non-proliferation approach that claims that the problem is not the existence of nuclear weapons, but the good or bad behaviour of those who possess them.

The only real solution is the total elimination of these weapons and the irrevocable prohibition of their existence. We reiterate that nuclear-weapon States are legally obliged not merely to carry out in good faith negotiations towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament under a strict and effective system of international control, but also to bring them to a conclusion.

We hope that in the Working Group on the item entitled "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" we can consider in a frank and open manner the reasons behind, for example, the lack of progress in the implementation of the 13 practical steps agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. That would enable us to create the conditions for formulating, in 2008, practical recommendations to advance towards nuclear disarmament.

With regard to the item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", we consider that the most effective course of action would be to focus on the questions pending from the 2003 agreements, when the Commission was very close to adopting a document on the item. If we act with realism and without exaggerated ambitions, taking full advantage of the progress we have made in considering this important issue, we could not rule out the possibility of being ready to adopt a good document at the end of the Commission's 2007 session, without the need to devote a third year to the item. Obviously, only events will prove whether or not this is possible.

We wish the brotherly delegation of Brazil all success in chairing Working Group II and we reaffirm that it can count on Cuba's full support.

To attribute the lack of concrete results in disarmament matters to the ineffectiveness of working methods is not only a simplistic and distorted vision of reality but also an attempt to divert attention from the true obstacles that we face. The main difficulties in the way of progress lie, first, in the lack of true political will on the part of some States, which have demonstrated their rejection of multilateralism and disarmament, and which instead favour unilateral action and selective non-proliferation.

Barely seven years ago, the Commission saw important changes in its working methods, adopted through General Assembly decision 52/492. But these were unable to avert a situation in which for nearly three years, due to the inflexible position of a minority group of delegations, the Commission could not even agree even on its substantive agenda.

Our delegation is ready to consider and discuss proposals to improve the working methods of the Commission, so long as these are not carried out at the expense of discussion of the substantive agenda items. We will support proposals aimed at strengthening, not weakening, the role of the Commission, and by extension that of the General Assembly, as the main United Nations body in the field of disarmament.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): My delegation is honoured to speak on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group. The Rio Group welcomes the convening of the 2006 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. This session assumes special importance in the light of the failure to achieve consensus in this important area in the runup to the 2005 summit of world leaders. A special responsibility therefore devolves on us all to renew dialogue and enhance understanding on the issues that frame our agenda, with a view to advancing towards implementable outcomes.

Our group is especially grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, for assuming the responsibility of guiding our deliberations during the current session. In extending warm congratulations to you on your election, we also offer the assurance of our full and ready cooperation. Our congratulations and assurances of cooperation are similarly extended to the other members of the Bureau. The Disarmament Commission has an important mandate to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament. It is incumbent upon the Commission to

approach its work with seriousness of purpose and a sense of realism. The Rio Group therefore supports your emphasis on the need for a constructive, forward-looking and realistic approach.

The agenda before us covers important substantive questions on the global disarmament agenda that warrant the most careful consideration. The Rio Group wishes to present its views on a few of those issues, as follows.

The first is the subject of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The common aspiration to peace and security can be fully realized only if we succeed in creating a world free of weapons of mass destruction. The Rio Group therefore urges the collective engagement of the entire international community in the prevention of nuclear proliferation and, at the same time, in the promotion of nuclear disarmament. The two aspects are mutually reinforcing and complementary processes to be pursued with equal vigour. We support the idea that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should be made universal; we also call for full compliance with all of its obligations and for respect for the rights enshrined in it.

The Rio Group recalls that article IV of the NPT states that

> "Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty.
>
> "All the Parties to the Treaty undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Parties to the Treaty in a position to do so shall also cooperate in contributing alone or together with other States or international organizations to the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the territories of non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty, with due consideration for the needs of the developing areas of the world."

The Rio Group wishes also to urge countries with nuclear capabilities which are not parties to the NPT to become parties to the treaty and to desist from the development and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. We further call on all countries to place their nuclear installations under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In our view, also, the IAEA itself, which has a central role in nuclear cooperation and in the verification of the NPT, should be strengthened with a view to enhancing its verification capacity and to creating an effective system to ensure physical protection of nuclear material.

Finally under the rubric of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, our group wishes to underline its conviction that internationally negotiated multilateral treaties in the field of disarmament have made and continue to make a fundamental contribution to international peace and security. It is the view of the Rio Group that the agreements already reached in the area of disarmament need to be safeguarded and that they should be neither renegotiated nor reinterpreted. In that regard, we are concerned by emerging academic approaches which assume that the world now faces a new unique strategic scenario and which thus seek to revise or undermine the foundations of the disarmament and non-proliferation structure built by the international community over the past three decades.

Universal ratification of and adherence to existing legal instruments relating to nuclear proliferation is an essential step towards nuclear disarmament. In this context, the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is critical to the fight against the proliferation of nuclear arms.

Turning now to confidence-building measures, the Rio Group subscribes to the view that confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms contribute to the important aims of strengthening international peace and security, improving relations among States, promoting the social, economic and cultural well-being of peoples and contributing to the prevention of war. Such measures should, therefore, be actively undertaken at all levels to facilitate the creation of conditions necessary for the achievement of these aims.

One aspect that requires continuing attention is the promotion of greater transparency in the import and export of arms. In this regard, the Rio Group considers

the strengthening of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to be essential to ensuring greater transparency with respect to conventional arms at the global level.

In terms of action at the regional level, the Rio Group wishes to highlight the importance of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which was adopted by the Organization of American States in June 1999. Our countries remain committed to the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

Finally under this rubric, the Rio Group notes that significant progress was made on the issue of confidence-building measures in previous deliberations of the Commission. It is our hope and expectation that the current session will build on the work done so far, with a view to consolidating the progress already made.

Turning now to the question of methods of work, the Rio Group stands ready to consider ways and means of strengthening the effectiveness of the work of the Commission. We take note of the views that have been expressed on this matter by various delegations. Our group remains disposed to engaging in constructive deliberations on any proposals aimed at improving the functioning of the Commission and enabling it to fulfil its mandate in the field of disarmament.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I wish once again to assure you of the full cooperation of our group as we embark on the consideration of the important issues on the agenda of the current session.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of Brazil, I wish to extend warm congratulations on your election. We are pleased to see you, Ambassador Oh Joon, presiding over the Commission. You and the other members of the Bureau may rest assured of our delegation's full cooperation in our efforts for a fruitful session. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka on his assumption of the responsibilities of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Brazil fully associates itself with the statement just delivered by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group. I will make a few comments in addition to that statement.

We meet today under challenging circumstances that could result in longstanding adverse effects on the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. Although it may still be too early to fully evaluate the impact of the international security environment that is taking shape, one feature stands out: there seems to be a growing perception that the multilateral system devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation is faced with a credibility crisis.

In May of last year, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) ended in frustration. Owing to the lack of political will from different quarters, it was not possible then appropriately to discuss substantive issues or even to attempt agreement on a final document. In September, the long-anticipated high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly lost a valuable opportunity to reach agreement and to provide new guidance on matters relating to disarmament and non-proliferation. This year, the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament will have completed 10 years of practical impasse, being unable to agree on a programme of work. Discouraging as those developments may seem, they must not divert us from the pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation within the framework of the United Nations. It is, however, of little use or comfort merely to reiterate that important processes have been reversed and that the active disarmament agenda has been paralysed.

The time has come to confront the causes of the current stalemate, to embark on a comprehensive exercise to identify the relevant elements of the security context and to map the road ahead. The Disarmament Commission is the proper forum for this essential exercise.

The Disarmament Commission is about to begin a new three-year cycle of deliberations. The fact that this is the first year of the cycle and that no final decisions are to be taken now should not lead us to avoid discussion or to put it off. On the contrary, the Commission should seriously discuss the issues that are before it and seek as much progress as possible, maintaining a permanent spirit of cooperation and striving for consensus.

It is worth stressing that this is a deliberative forum with universal participation, dedicated to long-term discussion of disarmament issues, with a view to the submission of concrete recommendations to the

General Assembly. It is not a body that negotiates legally binding agreements; therefore, it does not operate under the constraints that characterize such negotiations. Its location within the purview of the General Assembly means that it is the right place to hold thematic discussions on disarmament issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Indeed, the Commission has a unique role to play in discussing future options for disarmament. It should be in no one's interest for the Disarmament Commission to be seen as failing in this mandate. Achieving positive and substantial results in the Commission is even more important in view of the lack of tangible progress in other disarmament forums.

This year's substantive work will be entrusted to two Working Groups with different responsibilities. The issues we will have to address there are distinct in nature and scope. Progress should be made in all areas; yet, we should not allow advances in one to be made contingent upon parallel progress in another. The success of the exercise as a whole depends on that.

Mr. Chairman, my Government deeply appreciates the confidence that you and the Commission have shown by endorsing Brazil for the chairmanship of Working Group II, which is charged with confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. I wish to highlight the work previously done in that Working Group by Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, which was subsequently carried on by Brazil in 2003; it left us with a text that can form a basis for discussion, with a view to reaching consensus on substantive recommendations on the issue. We also believe that our chairing Working Group II can also be understood as a contribution to heeding the call made by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs today to delegations not to add organizational obstacles to the complexity of the issues already before the Commission. In this context, we hope that an agreement is reached as soon as possible on the nomination of a Chairperson for Working Group I.

Confidence-building measures are a powerful instrument for generating trust. Their implementation has a positive impact on the consolidation of a more cooperative environment, which is essential to the full development of national and regional potentials. Brazilian bilateral, regional and multilateral experience in this field confirms that reality. We encourage delegations to approach the upcoming discussions in an open spirit, so that the Commission can better understand the implications and results of confidence-building measures.

Unfortunately, the nuclear disarmament scene is still marked by distressing signs. Recent events could hardly be seen as the "ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", described in the mandate of the 2003 session of the Disarmament Commission. The growing international emphasis on strengthening non-proliferation mechanisms must be accompanied by similar efforts in terms of disarmament and enhancing international cooperation for the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Instead, it is disquieting to perceive that new rationales are being sought both for the maintenance of nuclear weapons or the development of new, more sophisticated ones and for the reinterpretation of the right to the development, research and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes recognized in article IV of the NPT. It is all the more relevant that Working Group I should seriously debate this matter and make progress in the formulation of a substantive document. The next three weeks will be an opportunity for an updated exchange of views on those issues.

The enormous challenges confronting the Disarmament Commission call for a deeper sense of responsibility and commitment to uphold the integrity of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. This session provides an opportunity to do so. Let us seize that opportunity by undertaking a frank and substantive exchange of views in the two Working Groups, taking into account the dynamics of the world outside this building as well as the realities within it and the need for concrete new ideas, initiatives and proposals to further the cause of disarmament.

Mr. Cheng Jingye (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at this session. We are pleased that, after two years of deadlock, the Disarmament Commission has started a new round of deliberations. That provides an important opportunity for all countries to earnestly explore how to further promote nuclear disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. I am confident that, with your experience and ability, you will steer this

session to positive results. My delegation looks forward to fully cooperating with you and with other delegations.

I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Tanaka, the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Since the Disarmament Commission's last three-year review cycle, the international security situation has undergone significant changes, generating both good news and bad news. The developments demonstrate that, whether in resolving traditional security issues or in tackling non-traditional threats, concerted cooperation by the international community and the full effective role of the United Nations and other multilateral mechanisms are called for.

Nuclear disarmament is an important item on the agenda of the current session. In recent years there has been little progress in that regard, and some disturbing trends have emerged. The Chinese delegation believes that, in order to promote nuclear disarmament, the international community should intensify its efforts in the following respects.

First, we must maintain global strategic balance and stability, which is the basis for nuclear disarmament. The relevant countries should stop research, development and deployment of missile defence systems that are disruptive of global strategic stability, and should refrain from introducing weapons into outer space.

Secondly, the two countries with the largest nuclear arsenals should further reduce their arsenals in a verifiable and irreversible manner, so as to create conditions for general and complete nuclear disarmament.

Thirdly, nuclear-weapon States could consider taking appropriate intermediate steps in nuclear disarmament on the basis of the principles of maintaining global strategic balance and stability and undiminished security for all.

Fourthly, the relevant countries should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as soon as possible, so that the treaty can enter into force at an early date. Pending its entry into force, it is essential that moratoriums on nuclear testing be observed.

Fifthly, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should reach agreement on its programme of work as soon as possible and conduct substantive work on nuclear disarmament, security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, a fissile material cut-off treaty and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Sixthly, nuclear-weapon States should conclude, as soon as possible, an international legal instrument on the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. Pending the achievement of that goal, nuclear-weapon States should, as a first step, renounce the first use of nuclear weapons and undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones.

China has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and has exercised utmost restraint in the size and development of nuclear weapons. China has never been part of any nuclear arms race and has always pursued a policy of not being the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances. China has also pursued a policy of not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. China has strictly abided by its commitment to a moratorium on nuclear testing pending the entry into force of the CTBT. China has signed all the relevant protocols to nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties open to signature and has actively supported efforts of the relevant regions in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

China firmly opposes the proliferation of nuclear weapons in any form. Nuclear-weapon proliferation has complex root causes and should be addressed comprehensively. In that connection, we propose that the following measures should be taken.

First, countries should embrace a new security concept that is characterized by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. We should give up the cold-war mentality, improve international relations, respect one another's security interests and strive for an international and regional security environment favourable to nuclear non-proliferation and the resolution of the relevant proliferation issues.

Secondly, it is important to safeguard and strengthen the international non-proliferation regime. Given that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the cornerstone of nuclear

non-proliferation, its integrity and authority must be maintained and its effectiveness and universality strengthened. Both the nuclear-weapon and the non-nuclear-weapon States parties should carry out their respective NPT obligations in good faith.

Thirdly, countries should commit themselves to ensuring nuclear non-proliferation by political and diplomatic means within the framework of international law. Relevant measures should contribute to international and regional peace and stability. Appropriate solutions should be sought through cooperation and dialogue, rather than through confrontation or coercion.

Fourthly, the relationship between non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be addressed in a balanced and harmonious manner. We must ensure non-proliferation while fully respecting the legitimate right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Double standards will not be conducive to international non-proliferation efforts.

Fifthly, it is essential to observe multilateralism, give full play to the role of the United Nations and other international organizations and pursue democratic decision-making with the full participation of all parties, so as to ensure that nuclear non-proliferation's just, reasonable and non-discriminatory in nature.

Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms are in the interest of international and regional security and stability. We believe that confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms should be in line with the following principles.

First, confidence-building measures should be preconditioned on undiminished security for all countries. Relevant initiatives will enjoy universal support and participation when they are premised upon strengthening universal security.

Secondly, measures should be tailored to the needs of different regions and situations, and countries should seek common denominators. The inherent complexity of conventional disarmament, along with regional disparities around the world, proves that there is no fixed formula in this regard. Regional confidence-building measures could serve as references. However, they should neither be copied mechanically nor be imposed upon others.

Thirdly, confidence-building measures should be developed in a step-by-step manner. In the current situation, our discussion should focus on issues of principle, such as national defensive military policy, keeping armaments at reasonable levels, and security cooperation not targeted at a third country. This will help promote consensus and provide a basis for discussions on specific confidence-building measures.

China pursues a national defence policy that is defensive in nature. Over the past two decades, China has downsized its military by nearly 2 million personnel. Unilateral action of such scope and magnitude is rarely seen in the history of international arms control and disarmament.

China pursues a good-neighbourly and friendly policy aimed at building friendship and partnership with neighbouring countries. China attaches great importance to and actively promotes cooperation on regional disarmament and confidence-building measures, and has reached a series of agreements and consensus with its neighbouring States. China is also exploring new ways to develop confidence-building measures with relevant countries in such frameworks as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia.

As the only multilateral disarmament deliberation body, the Disarmament Commission is irreplaceable in terms of status and role. The improvement of the Commission's working method should be based on full consultations. Relevant measures should help to strengthen rather than weaken its status and role. The Chinese delegation hopes that we will further explore the Commission's potential through extensive consultations and discussions so that it can continue its contributions to multilateral arms control.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2006 substantive session. We are convinced that your diplomatic experience will help to make this session of the Commission fruitful and successful. You can rely upon active cooperation and support from our delegation. Our delegation also warmly welcomes the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Tanaka. We also thank the delegation of Brazil for its decision to participate in the leadership of the Commission's Working Group II.

The importance of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body reporting to the General Assembly is evident. Belarus highly appreciates the agreement on the Commission's agenda and is of the view that the Commission should continue to discuss two agenda items from the whole range of disarmament issues, including one on nuclear disarmament. Substantive agenda items should be considered for three years during annual sessions of three weeks duration.

The current stalemate in various disarmament forums is not a direct consequence of the ineffectiveness of methods of work. Rather it results from the existing realities of the mordant security environment that have led to lack of political will to move forward on matters related to disarmament.

An honest look at the existing problems should not prevent us from searching for consensus solutions to the key issues on the disarmament agenda. Further deliberations in a free and transparent manner are a prerequisite for success in the future.

Being a strong supporter of the realistic approach, which assumes an incremental pace of nuclear disarmament, we believe that such an incremental approach should not become a formal shelter for inertness and particularly for activities that are not in line with the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Having made, more than 10 years ago, its historical choice to renounce military nuclear capabilities, Belarus believes that this decision serves the national security interests in the best way only on the assumption of unconditional implementation by the States parties of their obligations under the NPT.

Insuring non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is of vital importance. In this regard nothing should undermine the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the Agency ensuring verification of States' compliance with their commitments under the NPT. Belarus strongly supports the initiatives aimed at strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and attaches great importance to the introduction of a safeguards system based on the additional protocols to the safeguards agreements. At the same time we believe that further perfection and development of new types of nuclear weapons, as well as the appearance of defensive doctrines rationalizing the use of nuclear weapons, are not consistent with the principles of international law and with the NPT in particular.

Belarus is of the view that the final document of the Disarmament Commission on nuclear issues, which we are starting to work on now, should strengthen certain elements of principle. Our delegation attaches special significance to ensuring universality of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. Voluntary decisions of some nuclear-weapon States to refrain from testing nuclear explosive devices are definitely positive developments, but they cannot serve as an adequate alternative to a legally binding instrument.

Belarus is also convinced that it is necessary to provide legally binding assurances to non-nuclear States. We support efforts to elaborate relevant norms of international law. At the same time, we welcome unilateral declarations by nuclear States with respect to their policies of rejecting the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States.

One more crucial direction is banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The Conference on Disarmament should start without further delay negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty as well as on issues of nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and preventing an arms race in outer space.

At its current session the Disarmament Commission will be facing a responsible task to ensure productive conduct of the three-year cycle of deliberations on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. We support the proposal to start our deliberations on the basis of the Chairman's consolidated working paper, as contained in the report of the Disarmament Commission for 2003.

The Republic of Belarus has been pursuing responsible and consistent policies aimed at fulfilling its international obligations, including under the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Having eliminated, despite economic and financial hardships, nearly 10 per cent of its heavy military equipment — destroyed under Treaty provisions — Belarus has made a significant contribution to the strengthening of regional and global trust and cooperation. Belarus was also the first Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) member State to ratify the CFE Adaptation Agreement in 2000.

Belarus attaches great importance to the development and elaboration of additional bilateral confidence-building measures on the basis of the Vienna Document 1999 of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-building Measures. Political arrangements on additional confidence-building measures have been reached with all neighbouring countries.

The Republic of Belarus fully shares the international community's humanitarian concerns related to illegal small arms and light weapons as well as to landmines.

In 2003 Belarus deposited its instrument of accession to the Ottawa Convention. The process of eliminating approximately 4 million anti-personnel mines has already begun. The most problematic ammunition from the environmental viewpoint — PFM-1 liquid explosive — requires cutting-edge technologies for its disposal. Cooperation with NATO and the European Commission, in accordance with the Ottawa Convention, is aimed at reducing, to the maximum extent, the financial burden on the Belarusian budget. That is one example of the need for, and effectiveness of, international cooperation and assistance in the field of disarmament.

We also stress the importance of active international cooperation in ensuring the proper implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Belarus is convinced that a gradual movement from simple to more complex bilateral and multilateral measures and agreements will establish a solid basis for efforts to prevent armed conflicts and strengthen national and regional security, which are, in turn, essential elements of the modern international security architecture, a comprehensive and indivisible system.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, allow me to express my delegation's hope that this session of the Disarmament Commission will be successful and productive.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): First, may I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and also other members of the Bureau. May I also welcome Under-Secretary-General Tanaka and thank him for his opening statement. You have challenged us to find fresh momentum at a time of stalemate and to come up, over these next weeks, with some new and creative thinking.

Agreement on an agenda in the Disarmament Commission at the end of last year was a welcome development, but, of course, it was only a beginning. It provides us with an opportunity now to make progress towards substantive outcomes, of which, as many speakers this morning have commented, there have been all too few in our recent years of disarmament work.

Although the focus of this body is on deliberation rather than on negotiation, our discussions here should aim to reinforce and enhance the work of other disarmament forums in which we are pursuing similar objectives. We should position our discussions in the Disarmament Commission to contribute to the current processes under way in the Conference on Disarmament and wider multilateral arms control treaty structures.

As the Commission is aware, New Zealand attaches primary importance to nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. But we would like to see the debate move beyond a mechanical restating of countries' positions to active engagement on possible ways forward. In order to make maximum use of the time available during this session, we suggest that the Commission should look to build upon the material produced during the recent focussed thematic debate on nuclear disarmament within the Conference on Disarmament. Several key themes emerged there as commonly held priorities for action: first, the need for greater transparency; secondly, the role of nuclear weapons in military and security doctrines; thirdly, the principle of irreversibility; and, fourthly, the need immediately to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

A useful outcome of our deliberations here would be further agreement on ways to achieve concrete progress in these key areas of the wider nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation debate. We remain convinced that positive progress on nuclear disarmament would improve global security with respect to proliferation.

With regard to the work proposed on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, New Zealand believes that there is scope for outcomes from this Commission to contribute to the two conventional-weapon review cycles taking place

this year: the Small Arms and Light Weapons Review Conference in June, and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Review Conference in November. The Working Group II Chairman's consolidated paper on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms from 2003 produced some useful findings, we believe, on confidence-building measures, but there would also be value in trying to agree on further specific measures for action. Our deliberations in this forum should incorporate consideration of work done in the intervening years, particularly in the First Committee, on issues such as transparency in armaments, national legislation on transfers, illicit trafficking, surplus ammunition, and marking and tracing.

We are also keen to explore at this session ways in which the working methods of the Commission might be improved. We believe that it is time to move from a process-oriented approach to a results-oriented one. We look forward to the Chairman's working paper as a basis for further discussions on this issue.

These are my brief comments, Mr. Chairman. We look forward to working with you, the Bureau and all members of the Commission.

Mr. Hunger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Chairman, allow me first of all to express, on behalf of my delegation, our satisfaction at seeing the Disarmament Commission convened once again. Given the difficulties that the Commission has faced in recent years, the holding of this first session — and the fact that we have an agenda — is an encouraging sign that, we sincerely hope, will bear fruit during the three-year cycle of negotiations ahead of us.

My delegation would also like to express its pleasure at seeing you, Sir, chairing the Disarmament Commission and also to assure you of its full cooperation in the exercise of your functions. My delegation would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for his introductory statement, and we wish him every success in his new position.

The agenda of this cycle of negotiations comprises two items to be addressed in two working groups and one question to be debated in the plenary.

Concerning the first item on the agenda, my delegation would recall at the outset that we have always endorsed the idea that nuclear disarmament and the fight against nuclear proliferation go hand in hand. Indeed, since the failure of the 2005 Review Conference, the major challenges facing the NPT — for example, the ongoing uncertainty regarding the outcome of the Iranian nuclear issue or, more recently, the civilian nuclear energy cooperation project with India — not only have remained unresolved, but have become more complex. Switzerland believes that the NPT continues to be a basic tool for international stability. My country therefore believes it is essential to preserve the achievements of previous Review Conferences, particularly those held in 1995 and 2000. In that context, Switzerland welcomes the recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by Viet Nam, a State whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty's entry into force.

In addition, my country hopes that the structured debate on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which will resume in May at the Conference on Disarmament, will also be marked by hope. That would be an encouraging sign for the first session of the Preparatory Commission for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which will be held in 2007.

With regard to the second item, Switzerland is particularly pleased to see it reappear on the Commission's agenda. Switzerland welcomes the proposal to support the fourth revision of the Chairman's consolidated working paper from the previous cycle of discussions. However, that document must be updated so that it can facilitate our future work. Some subjects addressed in it — such as expanding the Register of Conventional Arms — remain timely. A group of governmental experts, of which Switzerland is a member, is now studying that issue and intends to report to the Secretary-General by this summer.

Other initiatives are in the process of becoming reality, such as the proposal to create an archive system providing a comprehensive list of confidence-building measures through the First Committee's adoption of the draft resolution entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms" (resolution 60/82). However, that document does not take into account a number of recent developments that should be fully integrated into the Commission's work. Here, we might consider the Arms Trade Treaty initiative, developments related to the Hague Code of Conduct or to the area of small arms and light weapons. Finally, we believe that the document does not take sufficiently into account a

series of issues that were studied in depth in 2002 and 2003 — particularly confidence-building measures based on the principles of good governance in the security sector.

Concerning the issue to be debated in plenary meetings of the Commission, concerning measures for improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation welcomes the opportunity to continue the discussion on revitalizing the United Nations system within our forum also. Switzerland hopes that we can take advantage of the Commission's purely deliberative nature so that we can have greater flexibility regarding the content and format of our discussions. My delegation is prepared to take part in efforts to that end.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): I would like to join others in formally congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and in welcoming the new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Nobuaki Tanaka. I wish him every success in his new assignment.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). We would like to elaborate on a few issues from our national perspective.

Mr. Chairman, you suggested that we should not be overly ambitious, nor should we be daunted by the difficult task ahead for the Commission. My delegation concurs with that statement. However, you also invited us to look to the future, to look ahead. Considering the series of disappointments in multilateralism witnessed and experienced in recent years, and the continued and increasing threat posed by the accumulation and proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, who would blame us for seeking short cuts — unrealistic as they may seem — to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons? Dangerous issues demand not just ambitious decisions, but tough decisions.

Earlier this morning, Under-Secretary-General Tanaka reminded us, and quite rightly, that the scale of the difficulties we face at the present time should not be underestimated. In my delegation's view, while it is necessary to continue to reiterate our respective positions, policies and doctrines on the various aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation, we must at the same time focus some attention on the way forward. In other words, we must try, where appropriate, to find new strategies and new approaches with regard to arms control and disarmament.

In our effort to come up with concrete recommendations for the General Assembly, some poignant questions come to mind. For instance, what do we do when binding obligations, commitments and agreed steps towards nuclear disarmament are either not implemented or treated with political callousness? If the world is indeed becoming more dangerous and the level of threat to human survival is increasing as a result of the development and accumulation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, what else can we do to eliminate that threat? Complacency in the area of arms control and disarmament is no longer an option. That is why my delegation continues to support efforts to find possible alternative approaches. Last year, for example, we were among the sponsors of resolution 60/56, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments".

My delegation would like to make it quite clear that, when we speak of compliance with and implementation of binding obligations, commitments and agreed steps, we do so in the context of both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. My delegation is therefore pleased that the title of the agenda item on nuclear weapons for this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is "Recommendations for achieving the objective" — I emphasize, the objective — "of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons".

In discussing and devising recommendations on the issue of nuclear weapons, it is absolutely necessary, in our view, that the Commission take into account the reality that disarmament and non-proliferation are inextricably linked — that they are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin. The Commission should come up with ideas on how to maintain the necessary balance in dealing with the issues of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We note, for instance, that the problem of perceived disproportional treatment is emerging in the Conference on Disarmament in the context of the proposed ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. Apprehension has already been expressed that such a committee, once established, might focus its attention exclusively on reduction of the nuclear arsenals of nuclear-weapon States, with

little or no consideration of issues relating to nuclear non-proliferation.

We believe that the Disarmament Commission, for its part, should help to address the so-called balance of treatment, which has unfortunately created a chasm between the need for compliance and the imperative of universalization of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

My delegation would like to make two suggestions in today's general exchange of views. Aware of the existence of roadblocks on the way towards the goal of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, our suggestions could be described as detours, as a way to circumvent the roadblocks and impediments that lie on our way towards the achievement of our goals.

The Commission, in our view, may wish to consider recommending to the General Assembly the adoption of a political declaration in which States would pledge, among other things, that, pending the conclusion of a multilaterally negotiated and legally binding instrument designed to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat or use of nuclear weapons, they would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction against any State.

We subscribe to the urgency of strengthening security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. However, as the representative of Indonesia stated earlier on behalf of NAM, the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Our view is that, in this day and age, a nuclear threat to one State or region is a threat to all States and all regions, indeed to all humanity. In the final analysis, security assurances should apply not only to non-nuclear-weapon States, but also to those that take pride in the possession and continued development of such weapons and their new delivery systems, and those that have the capacity to develop such weapons, the so-called threshold States. All States have a right to be free from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Another element of a draft political declaration which the Commission could perhaps consider recommending to the General Assembly is that without prejudice to the proposal for the convening of a world disarmament conference or the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV), the Assembly should request the Disarmament Commission to prepare a draft declaration and programme of action for another disarmament decade.

In view of the stalemate in discussions for convening the conference and the special session, we may wish to consider that alternative approach. The Commission has considerable experience in the formulation, monitoring and review of the implementation of declarations of United Nations disarmament decades. We believe that the new decade would also provide civil society and parliamentarians worldwide the opportunity to lend their invaluable support to addressing all aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation.

On the issue of improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the Commission, my delegation is prepared to consider any proposal, including the Chair's non-paper, on its merits. However, we would like to point out that since 1989 the Commission has gone through a series of rationalizations of its working methods; that the Commission is not the First Committee; that any major action for improving the working methods of the Commission would have to be taken in the context of a review of the entire United Nations disarmament machinery; and that the Commission should try to conclude consideration of this issue during the course of this substantive session and make a specific recommendation or recommendations to the General Assembly accordingly.

My delegation will cooperate with you, Mr. Chairman, with the other members of the Bureau, with the Chairs of the Working Groups and with members of the Commission as a whole, in ensuring a successful outcome of this substantive session of the Commission.

The Chairman: I thank Ambassador Rowe of Sierra Leone for sharing his views and insights, gained from his chairmanship of the Commission last year.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I now call on the Secretary of the Commission.

Mr. Alasaniya (Secretary of the Disarmament Commission): As members know, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has issued a note requesting Member States to submit their delegation membership rosters for publication in the list of participants. Let me remind delegations that the deadline for submission is Wednesday, 12 April 2006, at 6 p.m.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.